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Reports

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Fire on the City Gate: Why China Keeps North Korea Close. International Crisis Group. December 9, 2013.

China tolerates the nuclear ambitions of North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) for now because its interests in the neighbourhood are much wider and more complex than this single issue. Beijing and the West often work toward their shared goal of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula with contradictory approaches that reflect their different priorities. The West uses diplomatic isolation,

economic sanctions and extended deterrence to pressure Pyongyang to give up its nuclear program. Many Western policymakers believe the DPRK will denuclearise if sufficient costs are imposed and that Beijing holds the keys because the North is economically dependent on it. But China is reluctant to take any coercive action that might destabilise the regime and change a delicate geopolitical balance. It instead continues with diplomatic engagement and economic cooperation as the instruments it hopes will cause the leadership to denuclearise in the indeterminate future.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/north-east-asia/254-fire-on-the-city-gate-why-china-keeps-north-korea-close.pdf> [PDF format, 37 pages, 1.96 MB].

Item#2

The Posture Triangle: A New Framework for U.S. Air Force Global Presence. RAND Corporation. Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Alan J. Vick. December 5, 2013.

U.S. Air Force (USAF) global posture, its overseas forces, facilities, and arrangements with partner nations, faces a variety of fiscal, political, and military challenges. The report identifies why the USAF needs a global posture, where it needs basing and access, the types of security partnerships that minimize peacetime access risk, and the amount of forward presence that the USAF requires.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR402/RAND_RR402.pdf [PDF format, 129 pages, 5.79 MB].

Item#3

NSA Spying: A Threat to US Interests? YaleGlobal. Bruce Stokes. December 5, 2013.

Reports that the U.S. National Security Agency has collected internet and telephone data in Europe could influence negotiations for a proposed Transatlantic Trade and Partnership and require new understanding on rules for the digital economy. Bruce Stokes reports on recent surveys: A majority of Americans suggest that it's unacceptable for the United States to monitor phone calls of the leaders of allied nations; also, majorities in Germany, France, Sweden, the United States, though not in Britain, suggest that a nation's surveillance of its own citizens' telephone or internet data for security purposes is not justified. Majorities in Germany, French, and Sweden also do not find spying on citizens in other nations as justifiable. Favorable ratings of the United States are on the decline. Europeans now closely eye data collections by businesses and may consider regulations on cross-border transfers, while US companies point to potential economic benefits in detecting big-data secrets.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/nsa-spying-threat-us-interests> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#4

U.S. Governmental Information Operations and Strategic Communications: A Discredited Tool or User Failure? Implications for Future Conflict. Strategic Studies Institute. Steve Tatham. December 3, 2013.

Are U.S. information operations and strategic communications fit for purpose? This issue is debated herein, and the author concludes that, if the United States is to compete with emerging powers such as China and Russia, it needs to significantly modernize and update information operations and strategic communications. But, despite what critics and even Congress may say, these important programs must not be cut.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/files/1182-summary.pdf> Executive Summary [PDF format, 1 page, 559.92 KB].

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1182> [HTML format with a link to the PDF full text file].

Item#5

The United States and the Middle East: Avoiding Miscalculation and Preparing for Conflict. The Brookings Institution. Kenneth M. Pollack et al. December 5, 2013.

On September 11-12, 2013, the Saban Center at Brookings and the United States Central Command brought together analysts, officers and policymakers to discuss both new and enduring challenges facing the United States in the Middle East. The conference, The United States and the Middle East: Avoiding Miscalculation and Preparing for Conflict, explored the upheaval in key countries of the region resulting from the Arab uprisings, as well as longstanding conflicts and challenges.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/12/05%20centcom%20pollack/centcom%202013%20proceedings.pdf> [PDF format, 17 pages, 1.1 MB].

Item#6

Republicans More Optimistic than Democrats about Midterms. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. December 13, 2013.

Less than a year out from the 2014 midterm elections, Republicans are more optimistic than Democrats about their party's electoral prospects. But the "expectations gap" is far more modest now than it was prior to the 2010 election, when Republicans were brimming with confidence, or 2006, when most Democrats anticipated a midterm victory.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/12-13-13%202014%20Release.pdf> [PDF format, 11 pages, 514.29 KB].

Item#7

Bali Boost: WTO Lives, Snatched for Now From Jaws of Defeat. YaleGlobal. Jean-Pierre Lehmann. December 10, 2013.

A round of congratulations is in order for the WTO, after agreement in Bali on a package that promises a spirit of global cooperation and level playing field for developing nations, particularly in agriculture, commodities and labor-intensive manufactured goods. But the agreement is essentially a package of

promises. Ultimate success requires leadership and vision, warns Jean-Pierre Lehmann, international political economist. Outlining the history of the World Trade Organization, he points out that the Doha Round, initiated shortly after the 9/11 attacks, was widely regarded as a failed initiative with demands remaining a constant amid rapid global transformation: China joined the WTO in 2001 and soared as a global trade power; global supply chains dispersed manufacture of all manner of goods and services. Since then the trend is for a small group of developed nations to pursue exclusive trade agreements. Global trade rules require reform, and Lehmann urges the world to "seize the opportunities for a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable globalization."

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/bali-boost-wto-lives-now-jaws-defeat> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#8

Property Taxes in the United States. Urban Institute. Benjamin H. Harris and Brian David Moore. December 4, 2013.

This Tax Fact examines the property tax burden as a share of home value in the United States. Most counties have property tax burdens between 0.5 and 1.5 percent of home value. As a share of home values, counties in the Northeast, parts of the Midwest, and Texas tend to have higher property taxes relative to other counties.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1001705-TN-property-taxes-in-the-US.pdf> [PDF format, 1 page, 132.92 KB].

Item#9

"It's Nature, Not a Crime": Discriminatory Laws and LGBT People in Liberia. Human Rights Watch. December 3, 2013.

Being gay has never been easy in Liberia. Negative attitudes towards homosexuality are widespread, and the country has anti-LGBT laws that frame same-sex conduct as a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison. While these laws are seldom enforced, Liberia in February 2012 became the latest African country seeking to pass new laws that would further punish lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. One bill would extend the criminal penalty for same-sex practice to a felony punishable by up to 5 years' imprisonment; the other would explicitly prohibit marriage between persons of the same sex. The bills have lain dormant in the respective legislative houses since the Senate voted to pass the anti-same sex marriage bill in July 2012.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/liberia1113_insert_web_SPREADS.pdf Summary [PDF format, 10 pages, 979.72 KB].

http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/liberia1113_ForUpload.pdf Full Text [PDF format, 57 pages, 2.87 MB].

Item#10

Race Forward -- A New Generation Celebrates Black History. International Information Program, U.S. Department of State. December 2, 2013.

"America's most diverse generation yet names its civil rights heroes. Look at one urban neighborhood's rise, fall and revival. See how English is learned across America. Plus, real inventions you thought only superheroes had."

http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/30145/publications-english/1402_EJ_RaceForward_English_Low.pdf [PDF format, 34 pages, 12.3 MB].